

FY 2022 CONGRESSIONAL HEARING FACT SHEET ANIMAL RESEARCH AND ALTERNATIVES

BACKGROUND:

- ORD maintains a population of mammals and fish for research, including eight rabbits. The rabbits have been used to produce sperm cells for in vitro reproductive toxicology testing (a new approach method or NAM), substituting cells for both human and rodent exposures. The cells voluntarily provided by the rabbits further the Agency's goal to reduce the use of animals in laboratory testing through the development of alternative testing methods.
- On 1/20/21, a memorandum from Alexandra Dunn and David Dunlap documented direction for OCSPP and ORD to begin retiring the rabbits housed in the RTP laboratories.
- Current practices in EPA laboratories are consistent with U.S. Government policies and our existing applicable laboratory certifications. The rabbits are well-cared for in our existing facilities after their scientific utility has ended.
- White Coat Waste ran a billboard and social media campaign focused on ORD's rabbits, using the inaccurate words, "She breathes diesel fumes. You pay the tax bill."
- Congressional Inquiries. Rep Gaetz (R-FL) has sent letters and inquiries about ORD's rabbits.

KEY POINTS:

- ORD continues to invest in the development, testing and application of new approach methodologies (NAMs) that provide better, faster, and more cost-effective approaches to evaluating chemicals. For example, ORD is developing 3D models of human tissues such as thyroid and liver to identify potential tissue and organ effects, and researchers are developing high-throughput approaches to quickly evaluate the potential biological effects of chemicals.
- The development of NAMs is consistent with the implementation of the June 2018 TSCA Alternative Toxicity Testing Strategy developed by OCSPP and ORD.
- Rabbits: ORD currently has 8 rabbits for research that supports EPA's goal to reduce the use of animals in laboratory research by developing alternative testing methods. The animals are never exposed or tested in any way, and each rabbit serves EPA research for years. When their scientific utility has ended, they "retire in place" and continue to live at the EPA lab where they receive care, socialization, nutritious food, extensive human interaction, and mental and physical stimulation. They remain with their colony and the only caregivers they have known.
- EPA research activities follow existing certifications and accreditations to ensure the highest standards of animal care.

TALKING POINTS:

- EPA is proud to be a leader in developing methods and technologies that are drastically reducing the need for the use of animals in research.
- Researchers are developing faster and more cost-effective ways to test and screen thousands of chemicals for safety using computational and non-animal tests, which will reduce the need for animal studies while also providing the high-quality scientific information needed to protect human health and the environment.
- EPA currently has 8 rabbits for research that supports the Agency's goal to reduce animal testing. The rabbits voluntarily donate cells and are never exposed or tested. When the rabbits get old, they "retire in place" and live out their days with their colony and their caregivers.